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SUBJECT: IRAQI DEPUTY PM TELLS U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL WAR IS WINNABLE

REF: BAGHDAD 3243

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel V. Speckhard for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) On August 29, before meeting with other Iraqi officials (reported reftel), Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez and CDA Speckhard met alone with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, who emphasized that the war is winnable and that the international community must not give up on Iraq.

¶2. (C) Salih observed that he recognizes the debate in the United States about how to deal with Iraq, but that both the Iraqis and the Americans need to have realistic expectations. It will take "not one year, not even five years" to build an enduring and effective Iraqi government, he noted. Somewhat more optimistically, he said that if Iraqis do what is needed domestically and if Syria and Iran are dealt with effectively, the situation could be stabilized within a year.

WHAT DOES WINNING MEAN?

¶3. (C) The Attorney General noted that it is important for the Iraqis to talk publicly about having realistic expectations. He also asked, "What does winning mean?"

¶4. (C) Salih replied that winning means an enduring defeat of terrorism and a political structure based on democratic principles. But this structure, he said, would not be identical to the U.S. system but likely to be closer to the Turkish model. Salih added that democracy is the best system for Iraq because the country is multicultural, and democracy is the only system that can effectively balance all of the various interests.

RULE OF LAW INSTITUTIONS

¶5. (C) The judiciary is "not bad" compared to other Iraqi rule of law institutions, Salih said. He noted that it will need help operating under federalism as there was still much work left ironing out the details of how the courts would work and relate. He also underscored the need for more exchanges to the US for Iraqi judges.

¶6. (C) By contrast, Salih asserted that the Iraqi law enforcement organizations have problems, particularly the Ministry of Interior. He also lamented the fact that the Iraqi National Intelligence Service "is not an integral part of the state."

¶7. (C) The Attorney General suggested that the Iraqi government should do more to improve the security of judges, in particular by considering programs to provide more secure

housing. Salih agreed.

MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BUSH

18. (C) Finally, Salih said that history is in the making, not only in Iraq but in the entire Middle East. "We have no choice but to win." He asked the Attorney General to pass the following message to President Bush: "We appreciate your support for building democracy in Iraq and the Middle East."

19. (U) The Attorney General did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before leaving Baghdad.  
SPECKHARD